

IELTS 2026

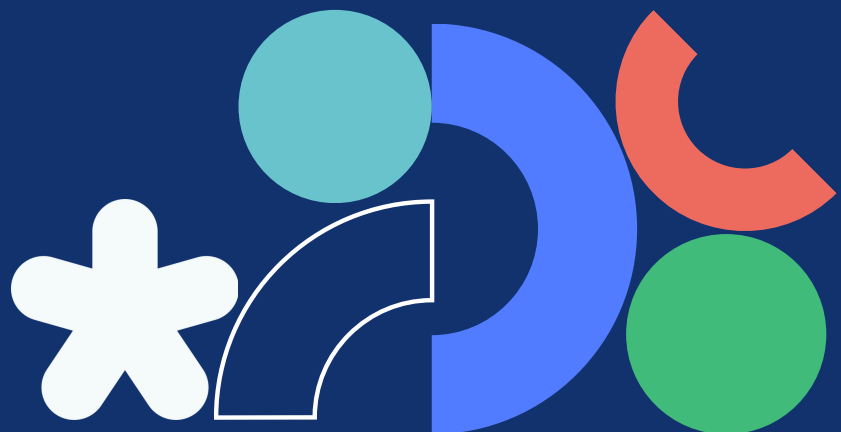
Test Day Prep

Checklist

What to practise before the day, based on the format you're sitting.

A practical companion to the 'What IELTS Test Day Actually Looks Like in 2026' video on the E2 IELTS YouTube channel.

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Step 1 — Know your format

Before any preparation, confirm exactly what you'll be sitting on test day. The four delivery options in 2026:

Format	Listening	Reading	Writing	Reading
Full computer-delivered	25%	On screen	Typed on screen	Face-to-face OR video call
Hybrid (select markets)	25%	On screen	Handwritten on paper	Face-to-face OR video call

My test details

Field

My answer

Test centre

Test date

Listening / Reading format

☐ Computer ☐ Paper

Writing format

☐ Typed on computer
☐ Handwritten on paper

Speaking format

☐ Face-to-face ☐ Video call



If you're sitting fully computer-delivered IELTS

Get familiar with the on-screen interface

The five tools on the screen during Listening and Reading:

- ☐ **Highlight tool:** practise marking key words in passages and questions
- ☐ **Note pad:** practise rough notes that aren't part of your answer
- ☐ **Review flag:** practise marking questions to come back to
- ☐ **Question navigator:** practise jumping between questions in any order
- ☐ **On-screen timer:** get used to it counting down for you

Action this week: Spend at least one hour familiarising yourself with the interface. This is non-negotiable for computer-delivered candidates.

Practise typing under timed conditions

- ☐ Test your current typing speed with a free online typing test. **Target: 35–40 words per minute on a real keyboard.** Faster is fine, but not required.
- ☐ Type at least three full Task 2 essays under 40-minute timed conditions before test day.
- ☐ Practise on a desktop or laptop keyboard, not a phone or tablet.

Practise typing under timed conditions

- ☐ The Writing screen has **no spell check** and **no auto-correct**. Build this into your timing.
- ☐ Always leave 4–5 minutes at the end of Writing for proofreading.
- ☐ Read every word slowly. Common typos: *accommodation, occurrence, necessary, definitely, separate, environment, government*.
- ☐ Build a personal list of words you keep getting wrong. Review it weekly.

Practise typing under timed conditions

- ☐ For at least one practice session per week, read your IELTS practice passages on a screen, not on paper.
- ☐ Use the highlight tool - even on web articles, you can use a browser extension to practise the habit.



If you're sitting hybrid (Writing on paper)

Practise handwriting under timed conditions

- ☐ Write your essays in pen, not pencil. The pen is provided by the centre, but practice with a similar ballpoint at home.
- ☐ Practise neat single-line strikethroughs for errors. No correction fluid. No erasing.
- ☐ Write at least three full Task 2 essays by hand under 40-minute timed conditions.

Watch your handwriting legibility

- ☐ If a marker can't read what you wrote, they can't give you the marks. Practise readable handwriting under time pressure.
- ☐ Write on lined paper similar to the answer booklet format.
- ☐ Keep your handwriting consistent throughout - fatigue often makes the second half of a long essay harder to read.

Manage the screen-then-paper transition

- ☐ Listening and Reading are still on a computer. So you'll do an hour-plus on screen, then switch to paper for Writing.
- ☐ Practise the transition. Do one 30-minute on-screen Reading, then immediately do a 40-minute handwritten Task 2.
- ☐ The mental gear-shift takes a moment. Better to feel that in practice than on test day.



If you're doing video-call Speaking

Camera and framing basics

- ☐ Sit at a normal distance from the webcam - the examiner should see your shoulders and face clearly.
- ☐ Don't lean too close. Don't sit too far back.
- ☐ Make sure the camera is at roughly eye level. If it's below your face, raise your laptop with books.
- ☐ Lighting from behind the camera is best. Avoid lighting from behind you (it backlights and silhouettes you).

The eye-contact habit

- ☐ Look at the camera lens, not your own image on the screen.
- ☐ This feels unnatural at first because you can't see the examiner's reactions when you're looking at the lens.
- ☐ Practise this specifically. It is the single most common "mistake" in video-call Speaking.

Audio basics

- ☐ Use a wired or quality wireless headset if you can. Built-in laptop microphones often pick up too much room noise.
- ☐ Test your audio with someone else before the day.
- ☐ Sit in a quiet room with the door closed.

Audio basics

- ☐ Do at least two full mock Speaking sessions on a webcam before the day.
- ☐ The point is for the camera to feel normal, not new.



Universal test-day checklist (regardless of format)

In the week before

- ☐ Confirm your test centre address, time, and what to bring
- ☐ Confirm the format you'll be sitting (computer, paper, hybrid, video Speaking)
- ☐ Get a full night's sleep two nights before (not just the night before)
- ☐ Do one full mock test at home, at least three days before the actual exam.

What to bring

- ☐ The ID document specified by your booking (passport, national ID - your booking will tell you)
- ☐ Water in a clear bottle (most centres allow this)
- ☐ Whatever the centre allows (most centres do not allow personal pens, paper, watches, or phones in the test room - check your centre specifically)

On the day

- ☐ Arrive at the centre at least 30 minutes before your scheduled time
- ☐ Use the bathroom before going in
- ☐ Take a slow breath before starting each section
- ☐ If you're computer-delivered, the first thing on screen should be a tutorial. Take a few minutes to walk through it
- ☐ If you're doing video Speaking, log in at least 5 minutes early (or time specified). Test your audio before the examiner joins

Consider OSR

If **One Skill Retake** is offered in your country, it lets you redo just one section if it falls short. Knowing this before you sit changes your study plan - you can prioritise the section that needs the most work. Do **not** use this as a study plan, but as a backup you hope you don't need.

- ☐ Confirm whether One Skill Retake is offered in your country
- ☐ Identify which of the four skills currently feels most secure
- ☐ Identify which feels weakest
- ☐ This is your retake-priority section, in case you need it



What's next

You now have:

- A confirmed test format
- A focused practice list based on what you'll actually face
- Universal test-day prep covered
- A retake plan ready in case you need it

This is enough to walk in confidently. What this checklist can't do is give you the daily, structured practice that builds the score itself.

Want a complete preparation programme that includes a familiarisation environment for the test interface?

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Keep practicing and be brave!

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